



The Honorable Mike Johanns, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue., SW,
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns,

Re: USDA Farm Bill Forums

2083

EAST MAIN STREET Vermont Farm Bureau thanks you and your staff for the opportunity to
RICHMOND comment on items of interest for Vermont agriculture and Vermont farm families
VERMONT as they may be affected by the 2007 Farm bill.

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Agriculturally speaking, Vermont is perhaps the least diversified state in the nation. While we are working hard to broaden our agricultural base we remain very much dependant on the dairy industry. This industry is an important economic engine for the entire state and largely maintains the infrastructure upon which the diversified sector and indeed the rest of our Vermont economy depends. Just as Vermonters are trying to broaden our base so should the nation look to diversify and decentralize the national agricultural economy. Locally produced and consumed food not only promotes good nutrition and better returns to farm operators it also improves national security.

Our most pressing need is that a fair and equitable system for the pricing of milk be found and applied nation wide. At present that means extension of, and full funding for, the MILC program even though our strong preference is for a non-government funded mechanism such as the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact.

It is also very important that federal regulatory mandates such as the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed rules for livestock operations be accompanied by adequate federal funding. In this same vein there is a great need to fund alternative manure management schemes because current technology is itself creating a host of additional environmental, social and economic concerns.

Use of foreign labor is also increasing on Vermont dairy farms. Simplified procedures to improve the availability of year round foreign guest workers for dairy farms would be most helpful.

Additional comments may follow as we continue to monitor this process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Arthur R. Menut II
Director of Government Relations

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE
SECRETARY, USDA

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